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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a report focusing on the concepts of lifelong education and the learning society as guidelines for education in the future in Japan. Chapters 1 and 2 give a general outline presenting the meaning and concept of lifelong education, and consider the necessity of such education in light of the social and economic background of Japan. After the existing educational facilities are evaluated from the viewpoint of lifelong education, general problems in promoting such education are pointed out. Chapters 3-5 deal with education for special age groups--pre-adulthood, adulthood, and old age. Problems are pointed out, and proposals are made regarding education at every stage of life to be carried out at home, at school, and in society. Chapter 6 reiterates the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture's commitment to lifelong education. (YLB)

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THE IDEALS AND THE TASKS OF LIFELONG EDUCATION

— A SUMMARY OF THE REPORT BY THE CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION

Section for Educational Co-operation in Asia
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH OF JAPAN
5-22 Shimomeguro, 6-chome, Meguro-ku, Tokyo.
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N O T E

This paper was prepared originally in Japanese by the Minister's Secretariat of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture for translation into English for dissemination under the NIER's Information Services Programme among Unesco Member States in Asia and the Pacific.

INTRODUCTION

The Central Council for Education was established in June 1952, as a consultative council within the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, in order to "research into and deliberate of fundamental and important policies in education, science and culture, and to make recommendations on such matters to the Minister." Since its inception, the Council has discussed and made valuable proposals on a number of major educational and cultural issues.

This is a summarized report on "Lifelong Education" which was presented at the 157th Convention of the Central Council for Education held on June 11, 1981.

Lifelong Education was first proposed by Mr. Paul Lengrand in his working paper for the 3rd International Committee Meeting for Promoting Adult Education in the World by Unesco held in 1965. The concepts such as 'lifelong education' and 'learning society' were later taken up widely by the organization as guidelines for education in the future.

Also, CERI (the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation), a division of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), has been advocating the idea commonly known as "recurrent education." This system aims to allow people to have free choice as to the time and method of learning after the completion of compulsory education, even to the extent that they can work and study alternately.

The main reason for the Central Council for Education taking up lifelong education in their discussion as one of the important tasks of the government is contained in the following idea.

"It is imperative, given the rapidly changing nature and ever-increasing complexity of contemporary society, that each person should be enabled to study according to his needs and desires, and develop his personality and potentiality in order to live a meaningful life. This is also necessary in order to keep and enhance the dynamism of society."

The Council discussed the matter on the basis of two main lines of approach: first, how the educational functions of society should be mobilized and improved in the promotion of lifelong education; secondly, what form education should take at each stage of development.

The report is composed of six chapters: one -The Meaning of Lifelong Education in Japan, two -The Situation of Lifelong Education in Japan and Its Future Tasks, three - Education for Pre-Adulthood, four - Education during Adulthood, five - Education for Old Age, and

six - Future Actions.

Chapters one and two give a general outline presenting the meaning and concept of lifelong education, and consider the necessity of such education in the light of the social and economic background of our country. Further, after evaluating the existing educational facilities from the viewpoint of lifelong education, the Council points out general problems in promoting such education.

In the following chapters which deal with education for specific age groups, problems are pointed out and proposals are made regarding education at every stage of life, from infancy to old age, to be carried out at home, at school and in society.

Chapter 1

The Meaning of Lifelong Education in Japan

Lifelong learning may be defined as an act by people who, of their own volition and using means and methods of their own choosing, study for their self-enlightenment and for the fulfillment and betterment of their life. Lifelong education, on the other hand, denotes the administrative process of improving the various educational functions provided by society so that they can operate in a better and more coordinated way.

In other words, lifelong education for an individual means continuing learning throughout his life in order to live a more valuable life; whereas for society it means accepting responsibility for increasing and improving the facilities for lifelong learning.

The report defines lifelong education as "the fundamental ideal on which the entire education system should be based to help every person to learn throughout his life in order to make his life more meaningful."

The underlying factors helping lifelong education to attain increasing importance could be summed up as follows:

1) the need to adapt to the rapid changes in society caused by technological and economic advances, and closer international relations

2) the general increase of educational and cultural aspirations among people

3) the increase in people's leisure time and economic capacity thanks to increased income levels and a decrease in working hours, and to the prolongation of life expectancy

4) the need to re-direct educational functions towards building a freer and more energetic society

The Japanese historically have a keen interest in education. Today, 94 per cent of all children having completed nine years of compulsory education (elementary and lower secondary schools) are entering upper secondary schools. As a result, a bigger population at school and an inclination for a longer academic career can be observed when compared with what was the case a few decades ago.

The recent economic growth has resulted in higher income levels and extra money to spare. Further, a decrease in the number of children in a family, in the amount of housework, and in working

hours, as well as the extension of life expectancy have made more time available for each individual to dispose of as he wishes. Higher standards of education and income and more free time for cultural as well as other leisure time activities among the Japanese public generally have promoted various learning possibilities and enhanced demands for increased educational and cultural opportunities.

In addition to the encouragement of lifelong education to enable every person to cope with the social changes caused by technical advancement, changes in the industrial structure, urbanization, the flow of information, internationalization and so forth, the report suggests that society should find an appropriate way to maintain and further develop the free and active society of Japan.

There is a tendency, particularly in our country, to place an excessively high value on the academic career followed in the relatively early part of life, and hence too much competition among young people to enter prestigious schools.

The report therefore emphasizes the need and desire to reorientate this tendency and to build a "learning society" where the idea of lifelong education is widely accepted and individual efforts to develop oneself are duly respected and appreciated.

Chapter 2

The Situation and Lifelong Education in Japan and Its Future Tasks

Educational opportunities are made available in various forms and fields in Japan including education at home, organized and systematic education at school from kindergarten to university level, out-of-school education in society, in-service education at one's place of work, vocational education at vocational training school, and commercially based educational and cultural classes run by private agencies.

Evaluating highly the strong motivation and desire for learning on the part of people, and the opportunities provided already to meet this desire, the report further points out some possibilities for improvement in two aspects; 1) educational facilities and 2) the environment for learning activities.

Major tasks suggested in terms of educational facilities are:

1) enhancement of the educational function of the home

2) promotion of the flexible administration of school education to enable school facilities to be used for adult education

3) general improvement of social education facilities

Those suggested in terms of the betterment of the learning environment are:

1) extension of information and counselling services with regard to educational opportunities, their contents and the ways of utilization

2) promotion of coordination and the exchange of information among educational institutions in both the public and private sectors, and promotion of coordination and co-operation between and among administering agencies at national and local levels

3) promotion of a deeper understanding of lifelong education among the general public

Chapter 3

Education for Pre-Adulthood

The period from infancy to adulthood is the time when one shows the most remarkable mental and physical growth. It is also this period of life which has the richest potentiality. The main objective of education during this period is to facilitate the mental and physical growth of children according to the stage of their development, and to provide the basis for further personal development at a later stage.

The important function of education at home is to help the well-balanced growth of children in all aspects of intelligence, morality and physical development. Parents have a significant responsibility to ensure that children satisfactorily complete developmental tasks at each age level, i.e., the transition from dependence to independence. It should also be noted that unintentional acts and attitudes on the part of the grown-up often exert a great influence on children in the process of personality development.

In recent years, training opportunities at home seem to be lessening due to urbanization, an increase in nuclear families and a decreasing number of children. Parents tend to put more emphasis on the intellectual development of their children, and protect and interfere in their children's life more than necessary. This general deterioration of the educational function of the home in the socialization of children and nurturing of their self-control is pointed

out as a result of weak links between the home and society and a lack of discipline. The educational function of the home, as the base for lifelong education and as a fundamental unit of society should be revitalized and improved. This ultimately depends on the enthusiasm and voluntary efforts by individual families, but appropriate assistance is also requested of the government.

In the field of school education, the development of motivation and the ability to learn during the period of compulsory education, i.e., elementary and lower secondary schools, the diversification of the curriculum and methods of catering for the interests and character of students, the improvement of guidance at each school level, and closer cooperation between school education and social education are regarded as being necessary.

Elementary and lower secondary education so far has shown a tendency to emphasize the imparting of knowledge to children. Under the pressure of competitive entrance examinations for higher level schools, teachers at school have been inclined to cram knowledge into the pupils and neglect personality training. In an effort to redirect this tendency, a new curriculum is being implemented. The new curriculum with more free time is so designed that children will be able to think for themselves, study positively and become more actively involved in school activities so that school life can become more complete.

Together with the improvement of school education, it is essential that social (out-of-school) education, and the participation of young people in society should be promoted, and that cooperation between home and school, home and society should be further strengthened.

Chapter 4

Education during Adulthood

For adults, the provision and improvement of learning facilities should be helped by promoting open-schools including universities, social education and in-service education, taking into account the diversified and advanced learning desires of the adult for self-enlightenment and self-development, and the limited time and money that they can afford.

The opening of higher educational facilities for adults is highly desirable from the standpoint of lifelong education. Already, quite a number of opportunities are provided as a part of formal education such as the auditing or research student system, special courses, evening classes, correspondence courses, day-and-night courses, extension courses of universities and others; however, there should be more flexibility and an improvement in the administration of education at these higher levels.

Besides extending the open-style school system including the forthcoming University of the Air, the following points should be examined in order to help adults take courses at universities:

- recognition and inclusion of credits already gained at other educational institutions

- special arrangements for entrance examinations taking into consideration the ability of applicants

- diversification of the evaluation of achievements

- flexible curriculum planning to meet the desires of adults

The University of the Air, which was officially authorized by an enactment of the Law in 1981, is important in that it ensures free and flexible entrance to university with no entrance examination, and provides wide learning opportunities for the adult by making effective use of radio and TV.

There is also a need to consider how to further open educational and research institutions at post-graduate level to meet the wishes for advanced education and to allow continuing or recurrent education for those who have worked for some years after graduating from university.

Making better use of part-time and correspondence courses of upper secondary schools, other specific courses, extension courses, and the open-school system is essential to expand the learning opportunities for the adult at community level. Adults should also be encouraged to make full use of special training schools, miscellaneous schools, junior colleges and technical colleges.

Social education, on the other hand, provides ample opportunity to accommodate the demands for learning in various fields, and its role in lifelong education is very important.

The systematic improvement of social education facilities such as community centres, libraries, museums, culture centres, gyms, play-grounds should be planned in the future, taking into consideration the characteristics of the community, the sphere of people's activities and actual learning activities performed. Further measures should be taken to improve facilities, programmes and leaders for social education, physical fitness, sports and art/cultural activities, which could include the establishment of comprehensive facilities for social education such as a lifelong education centre, and a scientific and comprehensive research-cum-training system for sports.

In order to encourage and assist individual learning, information and counselling services concerned with existing opportunities

and their contents should also be improved as a function of a comprehensive social education institution.

In-service or on-the-job training for workers is widely carried out by private enterprises, public offices and schools, and this facilitates the development and enhancement of the capability required for a particular job.

It is foreseen, as the labor force gets older and the industrial structure undergoes changes, that the number of people entering higher educational institutions such as a university or a vocational training school will increase in the near future as a result of the desire on the part of people to develop their professional ability, to refresh their ability to change their job, or just to enlighten themselves. It is therefore hoped that private enterprises will encourage their workers to learn voluntarily, from the viewpoint of lifelong education. Special consideration to facilitate attendance at evening classes and enrollment on correspondence courses, and the provision of educational leave for workers are the important issues to be examined.

Chapter 5

Education for Old Age

The proportion of aged people in Japan's population structure is rapidly increasing, and today, those above 65 years old make up 9 per cent of the total population. With the increase in aged people, proper educational measures to cope with their needs in their daily lives and their cultural aspirations have to be taken.

In planning measures for the aged, it is important not to regard their learning aspirations as uniform but to pay due attention to individual differences in ability, the state of health, physical strength and experience, and to prepare a variety of opportunities for learning for their choice. They should also be encouraged and helped to take part in sports activities to their own likings.

The home and society should not only protect the aged but make every effort to:

- properly evaluate the experience and ability they can offer
- promote their active participation in the community
- encourage positive interaction with other generations.

The most important thing, however, to enable an aged person to spend the rest of his life fruitfully is for his to have a positive

attitude towards life. Every person should start thinking while he is young how he will spend his time when he gets old, in order to be well prepared before reaching old age.

Chapter 6

Future Actions

The report concludes with the words, "The significance of lifelong learning lies in living a worthy life by studying and searching for fundamental problems related to one's life in science, art, religion and other sphere and by deepening one's inner life. Moreover, the immediate purpose of the government is to take all possible measures to bring about the realization of such a learning society."

In the light of the importance of lifelong education in today's Japan, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as the national administrative body for education is committed to the implementation of the proposals made in the report. It is also hoped that this report will serve as a guideline for local governments in their efforts to foster lifelong education in accordance with the needs of the community, with close cooperation and coordination among organizations concerned including local boards of education.